

I know it's hard when you have a loved one, somebody you love a lot, not going to be around for the Christmas season. And one way we hope to help you through the moment is to invite you here to the White House for what's going to be a pretty special moment.

So I want to say thank you. When you talk to your mom or dad or e-mail your mom or dad, you make sure you tell them that President and Mrs. Bush are sure proud of their contributions to our country.

And so with that, I'm going to do my second job, which is to bring to the podium here my wife, First Lady Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting With the U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership**

*December 3, 2007*

It's been my honor and the honor of key members of my administration to welcome Minister Abu Daqqa here. She's the Minister of Youth for the Palestinians. I also want to welcome friends, business leaders, community activists who are committed to a public-private partnership to help the Palestinian Government provide hope, particularly for the young—she's the Minister of Youth.

And so Walter Isaacson and the other leaders here have outlined a strategy to us as to how we can make sure our USAID money and our OPIC money can be leveraged with private participation to help the Palestinians develop a civil society that is a key part of making sure that the vision of two states living side by side in peace becomes a reality.

And so Madam Minister, you're seeing the best of America. You're seeing private citizens who care deeply about peace come together with a Government that is dedicated to a two-state solution to develop a strategy to help you succeed.

And one of the things that interests me a lot is the fact that we are going to help the Palestinians develop youth centers, places where young Palestinians can come

and learn new technical skills or language skills or have mentoring programs, all aimed at saying, there is a hopeful future; a future where you don't have to adhere to violence; a future where radicalism is not in your sights; a future where peace is possible.

And so we're proud you're here in America. We want to thank you for your commitment to living side by side with Israel in peace. You have a friend here in the United States to help you achieve this objective.

And I want to thank my fellow citizens for being so spirited that you're willing to take time out of your busy lives to help this young democracy get up on its feet and eventually lead the peace that we all are so hopeful for.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive officer, Aspen Institute.

### **Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2007**

*December 3, 2007*

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

Hanukkah commemorates a victory for freedom and the courage and faith that made it possible. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its sacred Temple was desecrated, and the Jewish people were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem. When the Maccabees returned to reclaim and purify their Holy Temple, the oil used for dedication should have lasted only one day but burned for eight. Every year since then, Jews have celebrated this victory of light over darkness and given thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

As Jewish Americans prepare to light the Hanukkah candles, we are reminded of the many blessings in our lives. The candles' glow has the power to lift our souls, put hope in our hearts, and make our Nation a more compassionate and peaceful place. We pray that those who still live in the darkness of

tyranny will someday see the light of freedom, and we ask for God's continued guidance and boundless love and His protection of all those in need during this holiday season.

Laura and I wish all people of the Jewish faith a Happy Hanukkah.

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

**Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty Between the United States and Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation**

*December 3, 2007*

*To the Senate of the United States:*

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation, done at Sydney, September 5, 2007. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State that includes an overview of this Treaty.

My Administration is prepared to provide to the Senate for its information other relevant documents, including proposed implementing arrangements to be concluded pursuant to the Treaty, relevant correspondence with the Government of Australia, and proposed amendments to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

This Treaty will allow for greater cooperation between the United States and Australia, enhancing the operational capabilities and interoperability of the armed forces of both countries. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Treaty.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
December 3, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4.

**The President's News Conference**

*December 4, 2007*

**The President.** Good morning. I appreciate the fact that the United States Senate is going to take up the free trade agreement with Peru today. This agreement will level the playing field for American goods and services. It will create new opportunities for investment. It will strengthen our friendship with a fellow democracy. The House of Representatives has passed this bill. I congratulate the House leadership. And I certainly hope the Senate will pass it as well. This will be a very positive step.

But Congress still has a lot to do and doesn't have very much time to do it. Three weeks from today, Americans will celebrate Christmas, and three groups of Americans are waiting on Congress to act. The first group are the troops. Our troops are waiting on Congress to fund them in their operations overseas. Nearly 10 months ago, I submitted a detailed funding request. Congress has not acted. Our men and women shouldn't have to wait any longer.

Second, our intelligence professionals are waiting for Congress to act. The legislation Congress approved early this year to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications is set to expire in February. Allowing this law to lapse would open gaps in our intelligence and increase the danger to our country. Our intelligence professionals need these tools to keep our people safe, and they need Congress to ensure that these tools are not taken away.

Third, American taxpayers are waiting on Congress to act. Congress has failed to pass legislation that will protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax. If Congress doesn't act, millions of Americans will be hit with an unexpected tax bill. And even if Congress does act by the end of the year, this action could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Congress expects Americans to pay their taxes on time, and the least the Congress can do is make sure Americans get their refunds on time.